
The
BLACK VIRGIN

By HERMON OULD

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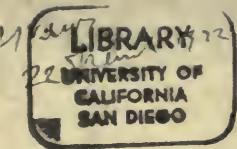
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ERRATUM :—
Page 62 line 3 ; For " concentrated " read " consecrated "



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THE BLACK VIRGIN.

THE BLACK VIRGIN

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

BY

HERMON OULD



LONDON :

CECIL PALMER,

OAKLEY HOUSE, BLOOMSBURY STREET, W.C.1.

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TO
STANLEY GREGORY,

As who should say

“A tribute from Thirty to Eighteen.”

In an ideal production of *The Black Virgin* the stage instructions would be followed as literally as might be: certain inessentials could, in less happy circumstances, be dispensed with. For instance, the church procession described in Act 1 could be reduced to a handful of persons by the expedient of raising the curtain later and dropping it sooner than an ideal production would demand.

The setting is only barely indicated. The producer's imagination is relied upon.

It should be borne in mind that the scene of the play is Southern Bavaria where men and women are less reserved than English men and women. Feelings there are less guarded than our feelings, and actions which we should regard as sentimental are, to them, perfectly natural.

The "Pathfinders" who figure so prominently in the scheme of the play are known in Germany and Austria as Wandervögel—Birds of Passage—too cumbersome a label for colloquial usage. They are a loosely organised society of young people who have thrown off the ties of convention in dress, custom and thought: they number tens of thousands and dress with a certain uniformity, the boys in shorts and tunics, the girls in one-piece dresses. They rarely wear hats and often dispense with stockings. One in almost every party carries a lute or a guitar.

A perspicacious producer will observe that several of the smaller parts could be doubled.

The Pathfinders' song on page 66 tallies with the folk-tune "Die Reise nach Jutland." "The Forsaken Maiden" on page 70 fits the folk-tune "Warnung."

PERSONS :

HOWARD
LENA
HANNS
JOHANN
HEINRICH SACHS
BERGENROTH
MAN
YOUTH
GIRL
HARLEQUIN
BOY
SECOND BOY

PATHFINDERS
TOWNSPEOPLE

SCENES :

- Act 1. Outside a Church in Burgstein.
Act 2. Living Room : The Calf Inn.
Act 3. The same.
Act 4. Shreinbaum : a clearing in the
forest above Burgstein.

TIME :

Mid-Lent Day, 1925.
The action passes between noon and
midnight.

CHARACTERS DESCRIBED.

LENA SACHS. Twenty-five; dark and secretive; her beauty has that quality of strangeness which at once allures and keeps at bay. She wears a costume which is a compromise between the characteristic Bavarian peasant's dress and the usual German bourgeois dress.

HOWARD. He is, to outward appearance, what we in our pride call the typical Englishman. Thirty years of age, good-looking; he radiates health, physical and moral. With his masculine forthrightness he unites a tenderness which is almost womanish. He wears the knickerbocker suit of the traveller.

HANNS. A boy of eighteen. There is nothing "national" about him; he might be of any nationality. An attractive boy, with a wayward personality which captivates all he meets, men and women. He wears the Pathfinders' costume. For all his spontaneity and lack of restraint, in him, too, there is an enigmatic quality—something held back.

JOHANN. A slightly-built man of twenty-nine, humourless but emotional. He is sensitive in an abnormal degree and is always on the verge of hysteria. His movements are rather spasmodic and not under control. He wears unconventional walking costume.

BERGENROTH. A man of thirty-three, with an assertive manner; there is something sinister in his way of speaking and nothing generous either in his own conduct or in his estimate of other people's. He is a prosperous farmer and dresses appropriately to his occupation.

HEINRICH SACHS. A gross old man, full of vitality, cunning and high spirits.

The OTHER CHARACTERS are sufficiently indicated in the text.

THE BLACK VIRGIN



ACT ONE.

Some seconds before the curtain rises one hears music—trumpet-music, very slowly blared: it is a church procession in Burgstein, a remote town on the Bavarian-Austrian frontier. The musicians are townsmen, with a sense of slow rhythm and of the solemnity of the occasion—of little else. Between the strophes of the music one hears the mumbling of praying devotees and one imagines the rosaries. During the prayers the sound of the Sanctus bell is sometimes heard and the tinkle of the censer: perhaps even the fumes of the incense percolate the curtain.

The curtain opens and discloses the tail of a procession entering the Gothic door of an ancient church. Those who have not yet entered the building are very very old: a man or two and a woman or two. Their faces are weather beaten and are ridged with deeply-cleft lines: the men are bent and doddering; the women hold their heads more erect and their fingers are busy with their rosaries. The eyes of them all, could one see them, would reveal a sort of numbed suspense: the purport of their lives (if their lives have purport) is held up by this religious ceremony which has claimed the presence of all the old people of Burgstein, most of those of middle-age, and the child-

ren who have not yet broken free from parental authority.

The church is somewhat to the right; a low stone wall, springing from its left, runs to the end of the stage and goes off at an angle. The angle of another wall, well down stage, completes the suggestion of an approach to an invisible bridge. These are the essentials of the scene: other things—a tree or two, possibly a crucifix—may be added.

When the old people have disappeared within the church a cassocked verger closes the door with a look round to see that nobody else is coming.

HOWARD is sitting on the wall down stage. He jumps down and simultaneously LENA SACHS enters from the Right. She is alone, but immediately following her come HANNS BERCEAU and JOHANN; the former carries a lute suspended from his neck; the latter a stout walking stick.

HANNS (*to LENA*). Will they be long? Is it a long ceremony?

LENA. No: it will take half an hour, or perhaps three quarters.

HANNS (*to JOHANN*). Is it worth while waiting?

HOWARD, *who has been aroused to interest in the group, crosses over and bows ceremoniously.*

HOWARD. Forgive me if I break in. Yes, it is worth while waiting. It is a very interesting sight. If you are a stranger in Burgstein and wish to see it in one of its characteristic aspects, wait. You see it is Mid-Lent—a special day. I

expect there will be high-jinks in the town all day long. And I'm told that you Pathfinders are having a spree late to-night in the forest above the town?

LENA (*abruptly*). How do you know? You are not from Burgstein.

HOWARD (*provocatively, with an amused look*). No, but I have been here two days.

LENA (*haughtily*). Two days. You are English, of course, or you would not be so conceited.

HOWARD (*laughing*). How did you guess? I was beginning to hope that my accent was non-committal. I don't ever expect to speak your language as you do, but I thought I had got rid of the English inflection.

HANNS (*with enthusiasm*). Are you really English? How wonderful!

HOWARD (*laughing*). Wonderful!

HANNS. You are the first Englishman I have ever met. Are they all as good at languages as you?

HOWARD. I am not good at languages.

LENA (*unrelaxing*). How did you learn?

HOWARD. I was in love with a German girl.

THE OTHERS. Ah!

LENA. And?

HOWARD. The war came.

HANNS (*impatiently*). The war—one can never escape the subject.

HOWARD. How old are you?

HANNS. Eighteen.

HOWARD. H'm. You were eleven when the Armistice came. The war 'can't have been a very real thing to you at that age.

HANNS. No: it wasn't. It has become almost real since, though, because everybody who is older than twenty-five never speaks without mentioning it. They seem to be proud of 'their silly old war. Oh yes, I know quite a lot about it, not because I want to, but because people won't forget it. Are *you* more than twenty-five?

HOWARD (*with affected lugubriousness*). Thirty!

LENA (*feeling herself out of the conversation, turning to go*). Good morning.

HOWARD (*raising his hat*). Is it permitted to ask your name?

LENA. My name is Lena Sachs.

HOWARD. And you live here in Burgstein?

LENA. Yes.

She goes into the church; as she opens the door there is a slight sound of reverent voices from within. Those on the stage stand silent until the door is closed.

JOHANN. Come on, Hanns.

HOWARD (*not wishing them to go*). Hanns. That is a jolly name.

HANNS. Do you really like it? That's splendid of you.

JOHANN (*impatiently*). Come on, Hanns.

HOWARD (*rather pointedly avoiding Johann*). Your name is Hanns, and hers is Sachs. Hans Sachs. How romantic!

HANNS. They were performing one of Hans Sachs' drolleries at a people's theatre in a village we passed through. I did not like it; it was just coarse clowning, I thought.

HOWARD. There speaks the true over-cultured twentieth century boy! We're not coarse *enough* nowadays.

HANNS (*with some regret*). You don't like coarseness, do you?

HOWARD. No, I suppose I don't; but I believe it's healthy, nevertheless. I sometimes think we should be happier if we were more open about life—had no reserves, no reticences—no curtains. Why shouldn't we be frank about the vulgar coarse things which are common to us all?

JOHANN (*observing Hanns' interest in Howard deepen*). I shall leave you if you don't come.

HANNS (*looking at him almost without remarking him*). Very well.

JOHANN (*wounded*). So!

He is going. HANNS, *full of contrition, takes hold of his arm.*

HANNS. Don't be a fool, Johann. There is no hurry. One does not meet an Englishman every day.

JOHANN. God be thanked!

HOWARD (*smiling*). You don't like us?

JOHANN (*shrugging his shoulders*). I take people as I find them—English or Dutch or Timbuc-tooish.

HOWARD (*persistently, but good-humouredly*). And I'm not to your liking?

JOHANN (*bursting out*). You're too much to his. (*Brusquely, to HANNS*). Come on!

HANNS (*with a lingering glance allows himself to be drawn away*). Goodbye!

HOWARD. Goodbye!

HANNS and JOHANN go off left.

HOWARD stands ruminating after they are gone. Suddenly coming to himself, he goes quietly to the steps of the church and, still dreaming, sits on one of them. HANNS runs in.

HANNS (*precipitously*). You said you were in love with a German girl and then the war came?

HOWARD. Yes.

HANNS. Is that all?

HOWARD. Yes.

HANNS stands in a state of indecision. Then, with impetuosity, sits down on the step beside HOWARD.

HANNS. Please don't think me inquisitive. Sometimes I'm like this: not often. Nothing holds me back. I am not inquisitive: I'm interested. Have you come out to Germany to find her?

HOWARD (*after a pause*). I thought I had.

HANNS. You *thought* you had. (*There is a pause of understanding*). Thank you. (*He rises.*)

HOWARD. You see . . . (*He thinks the better of his impulse to explain and as an excuse for detaining HANNS adds, pointing to the lute*). You play that thing?

HANNS (*with boyish enthusiasm*). Yes. Folk-songs. I sing them too.

HOWARD. You mustn't stay and sing now, of course?

HANNS. Johann is waiting. He would be furious.

HOWARD. He seems a bit of a tyrant.

HANNS. We're old friends—since I was at school. He taught me history. He's only twenty-nine now. Wonderful, isn't it?

HOWARD (*a little impatient*). You think everything's wonderful.

HANNS (*simply*). Not everything. But many things. Life's wonderful, isn't it? I'm only eighteen and I've found that out already. Sometimes things seem so wonderful I can hardly bear it. And there is nearly a lifetime before me, too, for new wonders!

HOWARD. When can I hear you play your lute and sing folk-songs?

HANNS. I don't know. We sha'n't be in Burgstein long—a couple of days, perhaps.

HOWARD. You will not have a chance of seeing this church procession again. Why don't you wait? It'll be out in about half an hour's time.

HANNS. Johann. . .

HOWARD. Damn Johann!

HANNS. "Damn" is English? (HOWARD *nods*). It is a swear word?

HOWARD. Yes: an excellent word. Goodbye. Go to your Johann.

HANNS. You are cross; and that's idiotic. I can't help it, can I? I can't desert my friend for the sake of a stranger, can I?

HOWARD (*high-falutin'*). Oh no, of course not. Go to your Johann. I shall wait for the procession to come out. Goodbye.

HANNS *moves some yards away; pauses and turns back.*

HANNS. You must have been very young when you were in love with that girl?

HOWARD. I was eighteen.

HANNS. My age.

HOWARD. It seems a very long time ago. You know, during the war we were cut off and I thought very little about her; but when the war was over I felt somehow that I ought to look her up again. There wasn't much warmth of feeling there; it was a sort of worked-up desire to make amends. So when the chance to come over here offered itself, I took it.

HANNS (*drolly*). I don't see why you should bother so much about the past when there's the present and the future!

HOWARD. Excellent philosophy! And how many times have you been in love?

HANNS. Oh, ever so many times! (*Ticking them off on his fingers*). Once when I was ten—that was with Elisabeth! (*He laughs*). Once when I was fourteen: that was with a friend at school. And with my mother, who died.

HOWARD. Nothing like variety!

HANNS (*parenthetically, with a glance off, Left*). Won't old Johann be wild? (*Turning again to HOWARD*). I could fall in love with anybody, I think—up to a certain point, you know; or anything. Think of trees! And squirrels with their lovely movement!

HOWARD (*quietly, but provocatively*). Really, of course, you've never been in love.

HANNS (*whimsically*). You mean a "grand pash?"

HOWARD. And what's that?

HANNS (*striking a theatrical pose*). A "grand passion" of course. Yes: I've had that too.

HOWARD. But you're not in love now?

HANNS. No.

HOWARD. Oh. Goodbye.

HANNS. Goodbye. (*He goes.*)

HOWARD. Hanns!

HANNS (*coming back*). How dare you call me Hanns?

HOWARD. What else should I call you? I don't know your other name.

HANNS. That's true. I have a funny second name—Berceau. You see, my father was a French-

man and his mother was Italian and my mother was Russian!

HOWARD. Then you're not German at all?

HANNS (*gleefully "catching" him*). Yes, I am. My father was a naturalised German and I was born here: see?

HOWARD. What a *sans patrie* you are! However, I shall call you Hanns!

HANNS. But calling me Hanns implies that you think I'm a little boy.

HOWARD. Surely you don't mind being thought that?

HANNS. I'm *not* a little boy. And *you're* only a boy.

HOWARD. I'm thirty. English people do refer to young men of thirty as boys sometimes. But it's foolish. I've long since been a full-grown and rather blasé man.

HANNS. I'm a man too.

HOWARD. You! (*Contemptuously*). You're a mere child.

HANNS (*abruptly*). Goodbye, then. Why did you call me back?

HOWARD. I wanted to know where you were staying in Burgstein; that's all.

HANNS. The Calf Inn.

HOWARD. Thank you. Then I may see you again. Goodbye.

HANNS. Yes, you may; if you're good . . . and Johann lets you.

HANNs *laughs and runs off Left*. HOWARD, *after a faint show of indecision, goes to the Right, and is almost out of sight when he changes his mind, returns to the Centre, and again takes up his perch on the low wall Left*. While he is doing this, and has his back to the church-door, LENA comes out, and simultaneously JOHANN comes on from the Left. They do not observe HOWARD who by this time is seated on the wall, with his legs crossed, his arms folded, his eyes fixed meditatively on the diagonally opposite corner of the auditorium. LENA pauses undecidedly for a moment, turning left and then right, and is overtaken by JOHANN.

JOHANN (*curtly*). Excuse me, do you know which way the Englishman went?

LENA. No; I left him here long since. I have not seen him again. You want him?

JOHANN. That is why I came back. (*Fiercely*). Who is he?

LENA. I don't know. A tourist, I think. They come here. It is one of the wonders of Bavaria, this fortress town. It is very old, very, very old. They say that parts of it are eight hundred years old. It feels old; the air hangs heavily here with old, old thoughts of people long-forgotten.

JOHANN. You speak as if you did not like it.

LENA (*shrugging*). I have lived here all my life.

JOHANN. You are not old.

LENA. I am twenty-five. I feel old. Everybody here is old, even the children. Did you see the procession? (*He shakes his head.*) They were all old people, so old that they have ceased to think or feel, and little children so young that they have not begun to think or feel—they have brought with them the wisdom of all the centuries and as they grow up they shed their wisdom and gather all the traditions of this old, old town.

JOHANN (*interested in spite of himself*). There is bitterness in your voice.

LENA. No. I am not bitter. But I am not blind. People begin differently. Children have little souls when they come, little souls with characters of their own. But they don't keep them. The old people won't let them. They worship the Black Virgin.

JOHANN. The Black Virgin?

LENA. Yes. Haven't you seen it? All the good people here have little shrines attached to their houses and you will see a little Black Virgin in each of them.

JOHANN. I thought it was age and the weather that made them black.

LENA (*quietly, as one imparting guide-book information*). No. They are *painted* black.

JOHANN. How queer! Is there any explanation?

LENA. Yes. It is quite simple. You know, hundreds of years ago they used to burn fires in the churches and had no proper chimneys? Well,

the images became blacked with soot, and as the peasants, when they put up images in their houses or outside their houses, wanted to imitate the Church as closely as possible, they made their Virgins black. That is how it is with us here. We collect habits and customs by mistake or misfortune and then we worship them.

JOHANN. Who *are* you? (*Then, conscious of the apparent rudeness of the question*). I mean, how do you know all this?

LENA (*shrugging*). I read; I talk to visitors; my father is an inn-keeper—the Calf.

JOHANN. We just booked a room there.

LENA. It is not a bad inn; you will not be cheated . . . I see more than most people. I am not a fool. I, also, accumulate; but I shed, too. I am twenty-five, but I am not yet too old to receive impressions. My mother was an educated woman: my father is an illiterate boor with a brain like a ferrit's. My mother came from Vienna: *she* had culture.

JOHANN. Why did she marry your father if he is such a boor?

LENA (*unaffectedly*). I am not my father's daughter. It was a bargain.

JOHANN. Ah.

LENA (*turning to go*). It is strange that I tell you these things.

JOHANN. I shall respect your confidence.

LENA (*shrugging*). You are here to-day: to-morrow you will be gone. You will forget me in an hour. I shall remember you only as one of a hundred tourists who have come to see this ancient fortress town.

There is the far-off tinkle of a lute. HOWARD, *who has been an unwilling but silent hearer of the foregoing conversation, quietly rises and goes off Left.*

JOHANN. My friend is waiting for me. I hear his lute.

LENA. He is a nice boy. The Englishman liked him.

JOHANN (*with sudden venom*). Yes: I saw it.

LENA (*with a fixed look*). Why did you come back?

JOHANN. I wanted to speak to the Englishman.

LENA. What did you want to say to him? (JOHANN *hesitates*). I have spoken to you without sifting my words.

JOHANN. But I am warier.

LENA (*indifferently*). It is as you will.

JOHANN. You had not seen the stranger before?

LENA (*hesitates a moment before she says*). I have seen him in the town.

JOHANN. He attracts you?

LENA (*flinging back her head*). Yes. Well?

JOHANN (*grudgingly*). He *is* attractive.

LENA. Why do you dislike him?

JOHANN (*quickly*). He is English.

LENA (*contemptuously*). That is not a reason: it is an excuse. One does not hate a person one knows because of his nationality.

JOHANN. True. (*The sound of the lute ceases*). I must go. My friend will be impatient. I must see the Englishman another time—or better, never. (*There is again a faint incoherent tinkling of the lute, revealing an unskilled player*). That is not Hanns!

He goes, without a word, nor sign of apology. LENA looks at him in some astonishment, but is too well in control of herself to express much outward consternation.

OLD HEINRICH SACHS *comes out of the church. LENA looks round as the noise from the church reaches her.*

LENA. You have had your fill then?

SACHS. That I have! Religion's all right for the old and fools.

LENA. And aren't you old?

SACHS. Old enough to have learned to scorn your tongue, fair daughter, and not too old to pay you back in your own coin. (*He chuckles*). Get to your work, child. (*LENA'S eyes are suddenly directed to the Left*). And keep your eyes for the scouring of your pots and not for the scanning of the river.

LENA *walks scornfully away to the Left. HOWARD comes on: he and she meet. SACHS eyes them up and down.*

HOWARD (*to LENA*). Tell me a better inn than the Crown and Turtle!

SACHS. The Calf, young man.

HOWARD (*bowing elaborately*). I thank you. (*He turns again to LENA*). Do you recommend the Calf?

LENA. It is as good as another.

SACHS (*thundering*). It is better than another: it is the best in Burgstein, blockhead!

HOWARD (*insinuatingly*). Perhaps you know the proprietor.

SACHS. That I do, better than I know most men. (*He guffaws*).

HOWARD. Perhaps he owes you money and you think my custom will ensure its payment.

SACHS. Let your imagination run its course, young man; you'll reach the truth some day. Pots, Lena, pots!

LENA *goes off Right almost without a sign of resentment.*

HOWARD. I assume from your manner of addressing her that that is your daughter.

SACHS. Yes, God help me!

HOWARD. You seem to regret it.

SACHS. A daughter is ever a trial. She is useless to you until she is of marriageable age and when she is of marriageable age and useful to you, she leaves you.

HOWARD. Your daughter is going to get married?

SACHS (*shrugging*). When the man good enough for her Highness presents himself. She is good-

looking and hard to please. Men are afraid of her. She is too virtuous, and men hate a virtuous woman. She has no weaknesses, and men hate a strong woman. She thinks above the heads of the townsfolk and the people who stay at the inn stay for a few days only and then go.

HOWARD (*feigning bewilderment*). The inn?

SACHS (*chuckling heartily*). To be sure. My inn. The Calf, where you are going to put up for to-night! Ha, ha, ha! They call me the fox!

HOWARD. And rightly. But never mind. One inn is as good as another. I'll have my belongings removed to yours.

SACHS. And how long will you be staying in Burgstein?

HOWARD. That depends upon circumstances. Have you many guests?

SACHS (*fencing*). A goodly few, a goodly few. They come and go. Here to-day gone to-morrow. Water on a hot stone! Pst!

HOWARD (*pumping him*). Interesting people perhaps?

SACHS (*impressively*). Very. To-day, for instance, a professor and a student. To look at, nothing! But brains! The professor less than thirty years of age and full of all the book-learning of the greatest sages! Wonderful! Colossal! And the student, brilliant! Plays the lute like a troubadour: you'd imagine the gates of Heaven were opened and that you were listening to

the angelic choir. (*His eyes roll*). Wonderful!

There is a sound of raised voices off Left: HANNS' laughing and protesting; JOHANN'S intense and humourless. HOWARD and SACHS pause in their talk. SACHS turns to the Left.

SACHS. Here come my guests. Not saying their prayers, it seems. (*HOWARD turns*).

HOWARD. Let us go. They would not like us to overhear.

SACHS. Why not? What's done in public, is meant for the public. It may be fun.

HANNS and JOHANN enter, the former first, his lute held firmly under his left arm, his right holding JOHANN off: he is laughing, but there is a trace of seriousness in his demeanour. JOHANN, wholly serious, glowers upon him.

HANNS. Go away; I don't want you. I'm tired of you. I will *not* have a master out of school. I'm free.

JOHANN. You're a flyaway, a feather, a bit of thistle-down ready to be blown away by the least puff of wind that comes. I won't let you go away like this. You'll regret it.

HANNS (*boyishly indignant*). Regret it? I like that. You're too swell-headed my good Johann. You must cure yourself of that or I shall *never* come back to you.

HOWARD and SACHS feel now that the squabble has become sufficiently public for them to observe it.

SACHS. Ts! Ts! Boys!

HANNS (*appealing to HOWARD*). Here! Tell Johann that he is an overbearing, conceited, stuffed-up, prize pig!

JOHANN (*with a swift piercing cry that silences the others and leaves an expectant emptiness*). I will kill him if he interferes.

HOWARD (*after a pause*). That is a foolish thing to say.

JOHANN (*sullenly*). One does not choose one's words at such times.

HOWARD. Such times as what?

HANNS (*impetuously*). It is like this . . .

JOHANN (*threatening*). I forbid you to tell him.

HANNS (*with a trace of nervousness*). Then I shall.
(*He turns to HOWARD, grasping his arm*).
Johann thinks that because he and I have been . . .

As soon as HANNS starts to speak JOHANN, in a blind fury, rushes at him, his stick raised. HOWARD—taken aback—attempts to intercept the blow which falls on HANNS' head, somewhat broken in its force by HOWARD'S action. HANNS falls to the ground with hardly a groan. SACHS, crying "Help!" is about to rush off, but HOWARD restrains him. JOHANN recoils in horror from the result of his own act; says nothing.

HOWARD (*to SACHS*). Be silent, you fool. Let us see what the damage is.

HOWARD *has stooped beside the stunned boy, whose head he raises to his knee. He speaks with calm peremptoriness.*

HOWARD. Fetch some cold water; and do not make any unnecessary fuss.

SACHS, *awed by the authoritativeness of HOWARD'S manner, goes out Right. JOHANN is still dazed, motionless. Presently he groans. HOWARD turns to him.*

HOWARD. Chafe his hands.

JOHANN (*falling to his knees*). My boy, my boy!
(*He takes HANNS' hands one after the other, chafes them*).

HOWARD. What a time the old man is!—Why did you do it?

JOHANN (*sobbing*). I loved him.

HOWARD (*quietly*). It is the love that leads to destruction. You are a fool.

JOHANN. I know.

HOWARD. It is well that you know. Suppose you have seriously injured him?

JOHANN. I shall kill myself.

HOWARD (*not sparing him*). If I had not broken the worst of the blow he would be dead.

JOHANN (*sobbing broken-heartedly*). I meant to kill him.

HOWARD. Why, in God's name?

JOHANN. Because I loved him.

HOWARD. It is madness.

JOHANN. Love is madness.

LENA *comes on with water.*

LENA (*quietly*). I have heard. Here! (*She hands HOWARD the water. He takes it and bathes HANNS' head.*) You are to bring him to the inn. Father is arranging for him. (*She stoops down beside HANNS.*) Poor boy! He is very white—except for that ugly red bump. (*JOHANN sobs. LENA looks at him, searchingly: he shrinks.*) You might have killed him. Perhaps he is dead.

A MAN *comes out of the church and is passing on when he sees the little group and comes back.*

MAN. Ho! What's this?

HOWARD. Go your way: it is nothing to hang around for.

MAN. Good morning, Miss Sachs.

LENA. Good morning.

MAN. The boy is ill?

LENA. Yes. Come here, Mr. Bauer. We will take him to the inn. (*She turns to HOWARD to give orders.*) You take his head and Mr. Bauer will take his feet. Between you, you can carry so slight a boy.

They obey her. JOHANN, *as in a dream, relinquishes the hands he has been chafing, and stands as they leave him, not changing his attitude.* LENA *follows the bearers part of the way and then, on a sudden impulse, returns to JOHANN.*

JOHANN (*breaking out at last*). You understand, don't you? I did mean to kill him; but I was mad, mad, mad—mad with love and jealousy and could not restrain myself. You believe me? I love him; he is my only treasure—the only reason for my life. I have no parents, no wife, no children, no girl. I must have him. I can't pass through life without him. I saw him going. . . I saw . . . Oh! you do understand, don't you? You don't condemn me?

LENA (*with no softening, nor hardening of her voice*). I am not sure that I understand: your reasons are not my concern. I believe you without understanding.

JOHANN. If you did not understand you would not believe. You are a wonderful woman. Thank you.

LENA. I am not a wonderful woman. Listen. If you have killed him (JOHANN *shrinks back with a moan*)—I don't say you have: *if* you have, you will be executed. There are no extenuating circumstances. You will have killed him without provocation. Your life will be demanded for his. You understand? (JOHANN *nods dully*). The forest up above Burgstein is thick; one hiding there would not be readily found. Disguise is simple for men. A change of clothing and a growing of the beard; a cutting of the hair. It is enough. I have little money, but I could let you have some if you wrote to me: Lena Sachs, the Calf Inn. My father cannot read.

JOHANN. But why do you . . . ?

LENA. Do not ask why. There is *no* reason.

JOHANN. Women do this sort of thing only when they love.

LENA. I love.

JOHANN. You do not love *me*? (*It is a statement rather than a question*).

LENA (*emphatically, but quietly*). No. I do not.

JOHANN (*wondering*). Then why . . . ?

LENA. I have said there is no reason. There is an instinct. Go!

JOHANN. But . . . ?

LENA *turns away abruptly and goes out*. JOHANN *stands where she leaves him for some seconds. Then he turns Leftward, as if to go away; turns Right, questioningly, and takes several impetuous steps in that direction; hesitates again; his attention is attracted by something in the not-far distance. An embodied indecision, he is already turning Leftward again and with a cry from the heart, flees.*

For a few seconds the stage is deserted. BERGENROTH comes in from the Left; he is looking over his shoulder, presumably at the fugitive JOHANN; with a supercilious look he passes off, Right.

The Church-door opens. The VERGER emerges and fastens back the doors. There is the sound of shuffling feet, and then the slow droning of the organ; one becomes aware of the gradual approach from the darkness of the church's interior of a procession, which begins to emerge as OLD SACHS, breathless with running, comes on from the Right. He goes hurriedly

to the VERGER, who is inclined to be shocked by his irreverent disregard of the precincts of the church.

SACHS (*blurting out*). A man in knickers—mincing creature—have you seen him?

VERGER. I beg you! God's will! Be calm! The sacred procession is coming. Wait, I beg you.

SACHS. Wait, when it's murder?

VERGER. If it is murder, then the last word has been said. (*He crosses himself*). The victim is, by the virtue of our Blessed Lord, in the bosom of God.

SACHS (*calmed in spite of himself*). And the murderer?

VERGER. Is in God's hands.

SACHS (*muttering*). And may He hold him tight! *Two small boys, in red cassocks and white-belaced surplices, both carrying candles, now emerge from the church-door; four portly middle-aged men, dressed in humble ill-fitting broad-cloth, follow, playing trumpet-music; behind them come two more acolytes, one carrying a censer, the other a Sanctus-bell; behind them follow a number of old women in black, telling their beads and muttering aloud between the strophes of the music.* SACHS, in *dudgeon*, hurries off, *Left*.

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

THE LIVING ROOM AT THE CALF INN.

Evening of the same day.

It is an old-fashioned room, with dark beams, a wide open grate Left, and sombre furniture. There is a window in the background, somewhat to the Left. A door, also in the background, Right, leads to the street; another, in the Left wall, leads to the bar of the Inn. There are touches of warm colour here and there, brass and copper. The lamp is lit and as the day fades becomes the only light on the stage, which is suffused in its warm glow. There are darkneses into which persons coming and going are caught in passing.

HANNS, *with a blanket over his knees, is seated in an armchair Left of fireplace. He looks pale, but not very ill.* LENA is sewing.

HANNS. Please may I say just what I like.

LENA. You will whether I let you or not.

HANNS. How quickly you have got to know me! Johann always says that. I suppose it's true. I'm a great deceiver. I pretend I'm humble and shy: really, I suppose, I'm very arrogant and very pushing?

LENA (*whimsically*). You won't always get your own way. You're a queer boy—so old for your eighteen years and yet such a child! Well, what did you want to say?

HANNS (*after a brief pause, hastily*). You know how beautiful you are?

LENA. Men say so.

HANNS. And how good?

LENA. I don't know what "good" is.

HANNS (*with thoughtful deliberateness*). Good is doing the kind thing for the sake of being kind and for no other reason. You are kind to me: why? Because you like being kind. You are wonderful!

LENA (*quietly laughing*). Silly boy! You will never know why I am kind to you.

HANNS (*hurt*). Am I not right then?

LENA (*getting up and going to him*). Of course not. You are a good boy; I like you; I should not wish to be unkind to you. But I am looking after you now—being kind to you as you put it—for a reason which is purely selfish.

HANNS (*knowingly*). That is only a way of brushing aside my gratitude. You can't deceive me, although I'm only eighteen.

LENA (*quietly*). You will believe what you wish to believe no matter what I say. Don't think so much. Go to sleep. You are not strong yet. If you don't stop talking (*a knock*) I shall make you go to bed. Come in!

HANNS (*with a trace of excitement*). You wouldn't dare to until *he* has been!

LENA (*disingenuously*). Who?

FRANZ BERGENROTH *comes in from Right and stands just inside.*

HANNS. The Englishman, of course.

LENA (*lightly*). You are crazy about the Englishman!—
Good evening, Mr. Bergenroth: did you want
me?

BERGENROTH (*ungraciously*). Who is this?

LENA (*rising and presenting them to each other*).
Mr. Franz Bergenroth—Mr. . . . (*to HANNS*).
What is your name? I have forgotten, if I
knew. Hanns . . . ?

HANNS. Hanns Berceau. How do you do? (*The
men bow.*)

BERGENROTH. I expected to find you alone. (LENA
says nothing). (*To HANNS*). You are ill?

HANNS. I had an accident. I hurt my head.

BERGENROTH. You look very ill: you ought to be
in bed.

LENA (*looking first at HANNS, then at BERGENROTH*).
No: he has but recently got up. He will go
to bed soon.

BERGENROTH. How soon?

LENA. I don't know. We shall see. You wanted me?

BERGENROTH (*low-voiced*). Yes. I can't speak with
that boy here.

LENA (*lightly*). Call again to-morrow. (BERGENROTH
squirms).

HANNS. May I have my lute, please?

LENA (*fetching it*). Here.

HANNS *takes the lute; he tunes it and during the
ensuing dialogue plays quietly.*

BERGENROTH (*observing HANNS' preoccupation with
his lute*). Who is he?

LENA. A guest.

BERGENROTH. How did he meet with the accident?

LENA (*hesitating*). It was a blow.

BERGENROTH. Who struck it?

LENA. A man you don't know. A stranger to Burgstein.

BERGENROTH. Where is he now?

LENA. I don't know.

BERGENROTH. Wasn't he caught?

LENA. No.

BERGENROTH. Did nobody *see* him strike the blow?

LENA. Yes; but they let him go.

BERGENROTH. Incredible!

LENA. But true.

BERGENROTH. Old Sachs, your father, wasn't about, I swear.

LENA. He was.

BERGENROTH. And he let the brute go?

LENA. He didn't realise he was going to escape. When he did, he was furious.

BERGENROTH. So I should think. And what did he do?

LENA. Oh, he ran off in the direction the man went; but he'd had a long start. My father came back more furious than ever.

The lute-music ceases. HANNS is asleep.

BERGENROTH. What had the boy done? He looks innocent enough.

LENA. Oh, why do you think I know?

BERGENROTH (*low-voiced*). You know everything.

LENA. Ha!

BERGENROTH. You laugh; but it's God's truth. Why did the man strike him?

LENA. Because he was jealous.

BERGENROTH. Jealous of a child like that? (*He looks more closely at HANNS.*) Who was the girl? (*Suddenly*). Not you?

LENA (*turning away*). I think I have answered enough questions. Will you now answer mine? Why have you come?

BERGENROTH (*in a fierce low voice*). You know well.

LENA. I ask you.

BERGENROTH. I have come to tell you what I have striven to keep concealed. (*With passion*). I love you, love you. (*He half-approaches her, but although she makes no movement of her arms, there is something in her look which keeps him at bay.*)

LENA. I know. I am sorry.

BERGENROTH. I knew you knew. You know everything: I have said it. You are a strange quiet woman, silently breaking men's hearts. (*There is a note of subdued hysteria in his voice.*) What can I do? What can I do? I see you do not love me; I see you wish me to go, and because I love you I shall go. But I am broken; there is nothing vital left in me. My heart was wild with desire two minutes ago: I wanted you so madly, wanted to crush you against me; but now I am suddenly numbed,

because I see the coldness of your eyes and see that your heart does not beat the faster for my presence. (*He continues after a pause in the same quiet, almost whimpering hysteria*). Oh, Lena, Lena, you are not human: you are a frozen image of allurements, unable to respond to the passion you create.

LENA (*restrained to breaking-point*). I am sorry. You do not understand me.

BERGENROTH. Does anybody understand you?

LENA. No, nobody.

BERGENROTH. The man who understands you will win you.

HOWARD'S VOICE OUTSIDE. May I come in?

LENA'S *eyes immediately light up*. BERGENROTH *remarks the change in her*.

BERGENROTH (*with intense jealous biting utterance*). Who is that?

LENA (*turning round on him in a sudden fury*). What is that to do with you?

Amazed by the suddenness of her change, BERGENROTH almost cringes away from her; the movement brings him to the mantelpiece, against which he leans in the gathering darkness, unremarked for a time.

HOWARD (*coming in*). How's the boy?

LENA (*now subdued*). He is sleeping.

LENA and HOWARD go to HANNS and look down on him in silence for a moment. *The pause is emotional:*

LENA *blinks as she turns*.

LENA. He is still weak.

HOWARD (*almost involuntarily*). God, how innocent he looks! (*He pulls himself together, almost sheepishly*). You are good. He is fortunate to have fallen into such hands.

LENA *takes her old seat, and picks up the needlework.*

LENA. I am only human.

HOWARD (*sitting on the edge of the table*). His friend has not been seen again?

LENA. No.

HOWARD. No doubt he thinks he killed the boy, so made good his escape. Poor beggar!

LENA. You mean the friend?

HOWARD. Yes—of course. (*Pause*).

LENA. You are leaving Burgstein to-morrow?

HANNS (*in a far-away voice*). No, he mustn't.

HOWARD and LENA look at HANNS: *he apparently still sleeps.*

HOWARD. What's that? (*He goes to HANNS*). He was speaking in his sleep.

LENA. It is strange. (*HOWARD, on tiptoe, is returning to the table*). Are you sure he is asleep?

HOWARD (*going back to the sleeping boy*). Surely. . . he would not feign sleep.

LENA. A joke. . . He is full of fun.

HOWARD (*leaning over HANNS: decidedly*). He is asleep.

LENA (*joining HOWARD*). It is strange. (*She speaks in a subdued voice and unconsciously puts her*

left fist to her bosom). I am twenty-five: he is eighteen; and yet I am his mother.

HOWARD. I don't understand you.

LENA (*difficultly*). It is a yearning . . . (*Her hands go out slightly before her, the fingers of the up-turned palms curling as if to draw in*) . . . a tenderness: I would protect him. He is eighteen—almost a man: I am twenty-five, still a girl. But I am his mother. I want to draw him to me, I want to suckle him.

HOWARD (*awed*). That is love.

LENA. It is love; but it is not love as women love men. It is not passion.

HOWARD (*groping*). You would not wish to marry him?

LENA (*with a gesture which dismisses the thought*). You do not understand.

HOWARD (*on a slight note of complaint*). You are not easy to understand.

BERGENROTH. I told her that ten minutes ago.
The others start.

LENA. I had forgotten you were there.

HOWARD. I had not seen you.

BERGENROTH. I have said it: The man who understands you will win you.

HOWARD. You assume she is to be won?

BERGENROTH (*with an ugly laugh*). All women are to be won—at a price. Hers is understanding.

LENA (*to HOWARD*). You are going to-morrow?

HOWARD. How can I? (*His eyes go to HANNS.*)

LENA. I am here. He does not need you.

HOWARD. No. It is conceit on my part. (*Diffidently*). Perhaps I need him. I can't leave him yet. My plans are fluid. I can stay longer if I wish. I never know when I may receive news recalling me to England; but until that happens I am my own master. I shall stay here—for a time at any rate.

BERGENROTH. What is there so attractive about the boy? (*He stares at the sleeping HANNS*). A good-looking boy; but there are heaps of such about! I see nothing special. Sentimentality!

OLD SACHS *enters from Left*.

SACHS. Ho, the girl entertains! You will find many a man waiting for your ogling in the bar-parlour, girl. Frieda has gone for her rest; it's your turn to work now.

LENA. I will come presently.

SACHS. And why not now?

LENA. Because I must see the boy safely to bed.

SACHS (*inimical*). It seems to me you concern yourself too much with the boy. Who is he? Who are his parents, and why haven't you sent for them? We are likely to be out of pocket by this Samaritan act.

HOWARD. I will see that you don't suffer in that way.

SACHS (*only half-appeased*). You are equally a stranger. (*He turns to LENA*). Get him to bed, then, and then go you to the bar!

He goes out, Left, disgruntled. LENA and HOWARD turn to each other. BERGENROTH is about to follow SACHS, when something arrests his attention. He turns to the window.

LENA (to HOWARD). Will you help me? I think we can carry him.

HOWARD (*removing the lute from HANNS' neck*). Yes. (HANNS awakes.) Hallo, old chap! You've had a good sleep.

HANNS (*yawning*). Have I been asleep here? How funny! Was that Johann?

During the last two speeches BERGENROTH has reached the window, where the face of JOHANN peering in can be faintly discerned. With a surreptitious look at the others, BERGENROTH goes out, Right.

HOWARD. Johann. . . ? Oh, you mustn't worry about him.

HANNS (*waking more fully*). Oh, of course. Silly Johann. I suppose he'll come back when he's got over his temper. But I *am* a tease! What are you going to do with me now?

LENA. We are going to carry you up to bed.

HANNS (*indignantly*). Carry me! I can walk as well as you can. (*He gets to his feet and takes a step forward; he is giddy, raises his hand to his forehead*). Lord! What a whack Johann must have given me for the effect to last all this time!

HOWARD. Love hits hard.

HANNS (*pouting*). Love!

HOWARD. So you see you can't be independent after all, for all your boasting.

HANNS. You *are* a rotter! I've a good mind not to let you help me.

He, however, puts his arm over HOWARD'S shoulder and takes LENA'S arm; and during the next few sentences they go off, Left.

HANNS. Have you written to my guardian? I hope not.

LENA. No, not yet. I shan't unless you take a turn for the worse. I told you I shouldn't. Don't be such a worry.

HANNS. You *are* a pair of bullies!

HOWARD. Children have to be kept in their places. *By this time they have almost reached the door; their backs are to the Right door, which slowly opens; BERGENROTH comes in, preceding JOHANN. HANNS draws in a sharp breath indicating a sudden twinge of pain. HOWARD, involuntarily, turns with great tenderness to him.*

HOWARD. My dear boy!

HANNS. It's nothing. It's gone.

JOHANN with an expression of distraction and jealous rage, is about to cry out, but BERGENROTH cynically claps his hand over JOHANN'S mouth and pushes him back, so that the open door acts as a screen between them and the left of the stage. HANNS, LENA and HOWARD go out. BERGENROTH and JOHANN come in. The latter goes stealthily to the door Left and closes it. He turns round to JOHANN.

BERGENROTH. You see?

JOHANN. Yes; I see that the swine has stolen my friend. (*He leans against the table and his arms—stretched taut at his side—terminate in fists which open and shut convulsively*).

BERGENROTH. What are you going to do?

JOHANN (*snapping*). I don't know. What *can* I do? You drag me in to see this! Why? You had a purpose. You're not a good man. I'm a cute enough judge of character to read you. You are burning with bad passions yourself, or you wouldn't have detected mine.

BERGENROTH (*cooler as JOHANN becomes more heated*). You are not polite.

JOHANN. No, nor intend to be. I *know* my thoughts are evil, and I've the grace to be ashamed of them. You revel in yours.

BERGENROTH (*sarcastically*). You are a pastor?—Not big enough for Luther's shoes, I'm afraid.

JOHANN. Say what your plan is. Don't beat about the bush. And why do you offer to help me? What do you expect to get out of it? Money?—because I have none.

BERGENROTH. I'm not concerned with your financial affairs. That man has gone off with your friend. . .

JOHANN (*breaking out*). I hate him. . .

BERGENROTH (*smoothing him down*). Yes, precisely. So do I.

JOHANN (*snapping*). Why?

BERGENROTH. That is not your concern.

JOHANN. How do I know you are sincere?—even in this? Why do you hate him? I am not a fool: I want reasons for your magnanimous offer of help.

BERGENROTH (*inspired with an idea*). He is English.

JOHANN (*laughing*). How simple you think me! This very day I gave that as a reason for disliking him, and I was lying. *You* are lying.

BERGENROTH (*coming nearer*). I see it is no use dissembling. You hate him because you are jealous. I hate him for the same reason.

JOHANN. You are in love with that girl?

BERGENROTH. Yes. Shall I say I *was*?

JOHANN. If you are not still why should you mind?

BERGENROTH. It is difficult to go on loving an iceberg; but it is not difficult to hate a man who turns the iceberg into a palpitating woman.

JOHANN (*awed*). What is the secret of his power?

BERGENROTH. I don't know; don't care. If I can't have her, nor shall he.

JOHANN (*in whom there is an unhealthy excitement*). Splendid. That's the right spirit. Now come on. Let's hatch the scheme that shall bring about his undoing. Ha! I like this. This is dealing unrepentantly in evil. I've been a dabbler hitherto: committed small sins and been ashamed of them. This is a splendid change. Well, what's your scheme?

BERGENROTH (*half-suspicious*). I haven't a scheme, you fool; we've got to invent one.

There is a stirring of feet, Left.

JOHANN (*somewhat startled*). Isn't it playing with edged tools to scheme the destruction of the enemy in the enemy's own domicile? (*He laughs. He turns as if to go*).

BERGENROTH. No: You must not leave here with me. I don't want to be seen with you. We must meet somewhere else.

JOHANN. Where, then?

BERGENROTH (*after a moment's pause*). Up beyond the fortress the forest starts; enter the forest at the first opening, walk straight on for five minutes and you will come to a clearing; you will recognise it by the shrine on the tree. I'll be there in half an hour from now: wait for me. (*JOHANN stands motionless for a second: BERGENROTH stares at him impatiently*). Well, what's the matter? Go on. Do you understand?

The faint tinkle of the lute in a room above is heard.

JOHANN (*hoarsely*). What is that?

BERGENROTH. What's what, you fool?

JOHANN. Music. . .

BERGENROTH. It's that fool strumming on the boy's lute, I expect.

JOHANN (*with renewed determination, an agonised expression in his eyes*). In half an hour, then. (*He goes out*).

BERGENROTH *nonchalantly takes a pipe from his pocket and commences to fill it; there is the constant movement of steps outside. He goes toward the door Left as SACHS comes in.*

SACHS. Still here, Mr. Bergenroth? And where is that precious daughter of mine? Not yet returned from coddling that boy?

SACHS *is a very little tipsy*.

BERGENROTH. He's taken a great fancy to her.

SACHS. The boy has? Not a bit of it!

BERGENROTH. You mean the Englishman has?

SACHS. That I would not say.

BERGENROTH. She has to him, perhaps?

SACHS (*slyly non-committal*). That may be. Girls are queer; and she's queerer than most girls. I thought you were in love with the girl?

BERGENROTH (*shrugging*). Me?

SACHS. You *were*.

BERGENROTH. *Was* isn't *is*.

SACHS. Marriage is the only cure for love. If you were in love with her, you are. You can put salt into soup, but you can't take it out.

BERGENROTH (*indulgently*). You're a wiseacre, you are! Well, if you like, I am in love with the girl; but she's not in love with me, so that's an end.

SACHS. When I was a young man, that would have been a beginning.

BERGENROTH. That's the right way after all, I suppose. I'll get her yet.

SACHS. And my permission?

BERGENROTH (*coolly*). I'm a steady man. Thirty-three years of age. Healthy. Got all my faculties; and a comfortable bit of money put

by. My farm's a thriving concern. Will I do?

SACHS (*thumping him on the back*). Go in and win, my boy, and may God have mercy on your soul and give you the patience of Father Job, for He knows you'll need it with a girl like that.

BERGENROTH. I'm willing to risk the girl if I can get her. (*He throws off the easy tone of banter*). I'm a man who generally gets his own way. You recollect the piece of land adjoining my farm, that belonged to Mr. Pieters? I offered him a fair price for it: I wanted it. He refused my bid. I offered him more, and he still refused, thinking I would offer more. But no; that's not my way. I poisoned that bit of land for him. Nothing would grow. He planted oats, he planted wheat, he planted barley. He even put it under hay. Nothing grew. Two years later he came and offered me that bit of land at half the price I offered him for it, and now it belongs to me.

SACHS (*laughing and shaking his head*). That was a dirty trick!

BERGENROTH. It was fair competition, legitimate revenge.

SACHS. And what grows on the land to-day?

BERGENROTH. Nothing.

SACHS. So what have you got out of it?

BERGENROTH. The satisfaction of having worsted old Pieters. In time the soil will recover.

SACHS (*chuckling*). And then, after a year or two, somebody else will come along and poison it!

LENA *comes in*.

SACHS (*with laboured sarcasm*). Is this really my daughter—come to attend to her duties?

LENA (*unbending*). The boy is not so well.

SACHS. The boy, the boy. . . . It is always "the boy."

LENA. I have left the Englishman with him; but we must send for the doctor. We must not take the responsibility.

SACHS. Is he feverish?

LENA. Yes. He was not before; he was much better. But suddenly, while we were upstairs talking, he said: "The house is full of evil: I can't bear it."

SACHS (*furiously*). God confound the boy! Full of evil indeed! My house! The most respectable inn in the country!

LENA. The boy was delirious. He didn't know what he was saying. (*She turns to BERGENROTH*). Will you please go for the doctor?

BERGENROTH (*effusively*). Of course—your command is my pleasure.

LENA (*unresponsively*). Thank you. Say it is urgent.

HOWARD *comes in hurriedly as BERGENROTH is going; the latter arrests his departure*.

HOWARD. He calls all the time for Johann.

LENA (*helplessly*). What can we do?

HOWARD. Is there no means of finding him? I could go and search for him.

SACHS. Don't be a ninny, man! What is the chance of finding him? He's had half a day's start: he'll be well into Austria ere this, with the voice of Abel crying out at him from every tree-trunk. (*He chuckles*).

HOWARD. It does seem hopeless, and yet it is impossible to sit and do nothing while Hanns calls out constantly for "Johann, Johann," as if his heart would break. I shall go, and risk it. I'll tell him; the mere thought of my going will pacify him perhaps.

He turns to go out Left, but he is held up by the opening of the door and the appearance of HANNS in pyjamas. He looks very white, but quite calm and unfeverish.

HOWARD (*distressed*). Good God, boy: what on earth have you come down for?

HANNS. Sh! You are too excitable Mr. Englishman. Where is Johann?

HOWARD. I am going to try and find him.

HANNS. He was here half an hour ago.

LENA (*going to him tenderly*). My dear boy, you are mistaken.

HANNS (*quietly keeping her off*). No, I am not mistaken. I have known Johann many years: we are great friends. I know he was here while I was upstairs. I felt his presence. (*He turns suddenly to BERGENROTH*). Was he

not here? (*Startled, BERGENROTH stammers; pulls himself together*).

BERGENROTH. No!

HANNS (*raising his eyebrows, boyishly*). What a fib!

LENA. My dear, you mustn't!

But HOWARD looks at BERGENROTH suspiciously so that the latter turns away uneasily.

HOWARD. You say he was not here?

BERGENROTH. Yes, I did say so, confound you!
Who are you?

HOWARD *shrugs his shoulders and turns away*.

SACHS. Here, get the boy up to bed again, daughter; and meantime, like the good-natured old fool you imagine I am, I'll take on your duty in the bar. (*He goes out, with the lurching gait of self-approval*).

HOWARD (*to HANNS*). Here, old chap, you must go back to bed, and I'll find Johann for you.

HANNS (*clinging to HOWARD*). You see, my dear good new friend, I must tell Johann that I still love him—that I didn't mind his striking me—that I understood. He is so unhappy: I can feel his heart aching in my own breast.

HOWARD. You must love him!

HANNS. I do, tremendously: it is so difficult not to love. (*He gets closer to HOWARD, childishly*).

HOWARD (*with a spasmodic gesture pressing the boy to him*). I'll find Johann for you. Trust me! Come on now, there's a good chap.

HANNS (*allowing himself to be led off, Left, to LENA over his shoulder*). And you'll come up, won't you, and talk to me?

LENA (*roused from her silent contemplation of the two*). Yes, of course.

When HOWARD and HANNS have gone, BERGENROTH comes slowly up to LENA with an insinuating movement.

BERGENROTH. I wish to bargain with you.

LENA. Well?

BERGENROTH. You are a good woman.

LENA. It has been said so often that someday, in spite of myself, I shall believe it. I have not committed murder; I do not habitually lie, nor do I steal. If these virtues constitute goodness, I am a good woman.

BERGENROTH. You are not likely to yield to temptations many women can't resist.

LENA. Perhaps to me they are not temptations.

BERGENROTH. You have always an answer. (*He settles down to his task*). You would sacrifice yourself for another.

LENA. I don't think so.

BERGENROTH (*daring her*). Someone you loved?

LENA. I don't think so.

BERGENROTH (*closely*). You love that boy?

LENA. Yes.

BERGENROTH. What would you give for him?

LENA. I don't know what you mean.

BERGENROTH. Would you, to save his life, give yours?

LENA (*an almost imperceptible tremor in her voice*).
What is my life? (*She shrugs her shoulders,
looks about her, wide-eyed. She stretches out
her arms, opens her hands, as if to let
her life trickle through her fingers, a thing
of no account.*) Yes.

BERGENROTH. I do not ask you to give your life.

LENA. You do not ask?

BERGENROTH. I love you.

LENA. You have said so, who do not know the meaning of love.

BERGENROTH. If I give you his life, will you give yourself to me?

LENA. His life is not yours.

BERGENROTH. He will die if you cannot find his friend; his life is ebbing—one can see it: he is already half in the next world, seeing visions. I know where his friend is. I can tell you where he can be found at once. Give yourself to me and the boy's mind will be at rest and his life saved.

LENA (*for the first time losing self-control*). I can't, I can't, I dare not. I can't give you myself: I am not my own.

BERGENROTH. But if he dies . . . ?

LENA (*off her guard*). I didn't mean him.

BERGENROTH. You meant that . . . (*a low scream of rage escapes him*). I know whom you meant. But you stand no chance there. He has no eyes for you.

LENA (*with a bitter cry from the heart*). God help me! Is it so plain to all the world?

BERGENROTH (*bluntly*). As plain as a pikestaff.

LENA. Yet while he lives . .

BERGENROTH (*involuntarily*). While he lives . . .

The two glare at each other for a moment. Presently

LENA draws herself up to a posture of superb dignity.

BERGENROTH, his eyes fixed eagerly upon her, is doubtful of her intention.

LENA. You see me as I am—a woman loathing you (*BERGENROTH shrinks*); loving another man with all my soul without knowing why; and loving a boy of eighteen with all the tenderness of a childless mother. (*She pauses. He expects her to go on, so does not interrupt, but waits in tense expectation*). Would you take me, so?

BERGENROTH. Yes! (*He goes towards her with a passionate movement: she keeps him at bay with a gesture*).

LENA. Bring the man here then.

BERGENROTH. I didn't undertake to bring him here. I said I would tell you where he was. That I will do. Let your Englishman go for him.

LENA. Call him: I cannot.

BERGENROTH (*going to the door left*). Mr. Sachs! (*Pause*). Will you tell the Englishman we are waiting?

SACHS, *off*, mumbles. BERGENROTH *comes back*.

LENA *has remained motionless, stonelike. He ap-*

proaches her, as if to speak; is rather scared by her immobility, changes his mind and goes away from her. No word passes between them. HOWARD comes in.

HOWARD. Well?

LENA. He will tell you where Johann is to be found.

LENA lets her eyes move in the direction of BERGENROTH. HOWARD, too, is a little taken aback by her motionlessness.

HOWARD. You *do* know then?

BERGENROTH (*shortly*). Come, I will tell you where he is to be found.

With a glance of questioning towards LENA, to which she does not respond, HOWARD follows BERGENROTH out. The door closes. LENA remains unmoving.

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

THE INN.

LENA *has not moved.*

HOWARD *comes in quietly. LENA does not hear him.*

HOWARD. Have you been standing there ever since
I went out?

LENA (*starting*). But you only just went out.

HOWARD. It is at least ten minutes since I went
out.

LENA (*with assumed lightness*). I was day-dreaming.

HOWARD. You seemed spell-bound.

LENA. I think I was. Why have you returned?

HOWARD. There is no hurry. That man . . .

LENA. Bergenroth?—

HOWARD. Yes—said that Johann will not be at the
place he mentioned for at least half-an-hour.

LENA. Oh. And what place is it?

HOWARD. A clearing in the wood, above the town,
midway between here and the Tannenkreis: a
place called Schreinbaum.

LENA. I know it. Where the roads fork. One path
takes you still higher above the town; the other
to Tannenkreis. It is there that the Pathfinders
are gathering to-night for the Mid-Lent merry-
making; a great day for them. You ought
to go.

HOWARD. How can I?

LENA. True. (*There is the sound of music off*).
The world is full of music to-night.

HOWARD. Yes, the revellers; and that boy lying in pain!

LENA. I think he is not now physically ill; and his mind is eased now that he knows you are going to find his friend.

HOWARD. May I succeed in doing so!

LENA. You will.

HOWARD. You think Bergenroth is to be trusted?

LENA. On this occasion, yes.

HOWARD. Only on this occasion?

LENA. Yes. It is a bargain.

HOWARD (*coming closer to her*). What is the price you have bid for his help?

LENA (*proudly*). You have no right to ask.

HOWARD (*accepting the rebuke*). No. I am sorry. But you led me to ask.

LENA. I wanted you to ask.

HOWARD. In order that you might refuse to answer?

LENA. Yes. (*Quietly*). You see: I am capricious, like all women.

HOWARD. Not like all women. You had an ulterior motive—a good motive—in leading me to ask.

LENA (*impatiently*). Why a "good" motive? I have never claimed "goodness"; why do you all credit me with "goodness?" I am human, a woman, with the desires and longings common to my sex.

HOWARD. But with none of their wiles.

LENA. But all men see through women's wiles. They're a sham, but an acknowledged sham.

HOWARD. Part of the game of sex?

LENA. Yes. And because I will not make use of these tricks, people say I am "good"—not gracious, but "good," virtuous, without natural womanish desires or feelings. Pf! They are fools. I have little of the "goodness" they credit me with, but some virtues which perhaps they don't suspect.

HOWARD (*fascinated by her earnestness*). You are hard on them: how could they be expected to understand anything but the obvious? Nobody does. As your friend Bergenroth said—

LENA. My friend!

HOWARD. He claims your friendship . . indeed he claims more . . .

LENA (*in quiet heat*). And has no right.

HOWARD. How should I know?

LENA. I am not blaming you.

HOWARD (*going closer to her*). You are holding something back all the time. True, I have only known you a day, but . . .

LENA (*in wonder*). Only a day . . ! Yes, only a day. We mortals speak of time. Yet we two are immemorially linked.

HOWARD (*uneasy*). I don't understand.

LENA. No, not with your head.

HOWARD. You speak as a mystic. (*He is half-inclined to laugh*).

LENA. Mysticism is another of my attributes according to the folk here. If it were the Middle-

Ages they would burn me for a witch. (*She laughs*).

HOWARD. You are amazing.

LENA. The boy upstairs understands.

HOWARD. Oh, *he* is wonderful.

LENA. No; not wonderful. He gives his instincts free play, that is all.

HOWARD (*interested*). And I?

LENA. You are free, too, but only physically. You come, you go; you have courage, strength; but your mind is still chained, a slave.

HOWARD (*resentfully*). But I assure you . .

LENA (*shrugging*). Of course you don't think so; nobody does. But wait until life offers you a choice which runs counter to your tethered mind; then you will see how just is my criticism.

HOWARD. I wish you would tell me . . (*A knock*).

LENA. Come in!

TWO PATHFINDERS *come in: a YOUTH and a GIRL*.

GIRL. Excuse me. There were two Pathfinders staying here?

LENA. One still is; the other is gone.

GIRL. There is a festival to-night at the Tannenkreis, in the forest; do they know?

LENA. I'm not sure; but the elder of them is gone, and the younger one isn't well.

YOUTH. Thank you. We thought they ought to know. It will be great fun. You may come too, if you like. It isn't only for Pathfinders. Any young people will be welcome. (*He*

waxes enthusiastic). We're going to let the old folk see that we've done with 'em. It's time Youth had a go! We're tired of being cooped up and serious. Do come, if you can.

The door Left opens and a HARLEQUIN pirouettes in; he sidles up to LENA, puts his arm round her waist and attempts unsuccessfully to kiss her.

HARLEQUIN. No reserve to-night, Lena, you beautiful virgin.

LENA *wrenches herself free. Unabashed, the HARLEQUIN pirouettes across the stage and through the other door.*

LENA (*flinging out her arms in disgust*). His breath!
HOWARD. Who was it?

LENA. One of the customers. Mid-Lent has become an excuse for this!

GIRL. It is the old spirit. Bad breath and stuffiness which break into license once a year. (*She turns to the YOUTH*). Come on, dear! (*To LENA*). And thank you! If the boy can come, tell him to, and you too. (*The HARLEQUIN pushes his head through the window and grins, withdrawing it as the GIRL looks at him*). I think you two are not like that (*indicating the figure at the window.*)

YOUTH and GIRL go out. *There is the sound of raucous laughter and coarse singing in the room off Left.*

HOWARD. Do you think the boy is sleeping through this? Shall I go to him?

LENA. You can't bear to stay here any longer? (*She laughs a little harshly*).

HOWARD (*uneasily*). It isn't that. . . The kid is so deuced winning!

LENA. Why is it? What is it in him that attracts you?

HOWARD. For that matter, what is there in him that attracts *you*?

LENA. I know what it is.

HOWARD. Well?

LENA. It is my latent motherhood.

HOWARD (*with understanding*). I see. I think I understand that.

LENA. And you?

HOWARD. It isn't so easy for me to answer.

LENA (*eagerly*). Is it not the latent fatherhood?

HOWARD. No. Or if it is that it is something else besides. It is not easy to explain. (*He laughs*). I would rather say it is the latent motherhood. And it is not only that. Oh, I don't know what it is! He is the coming generation—Youth: I am already passing into the last generation . . . into middle-age! Perhaps it's that.

LENA. At thirty! Nonsense!

HOWARD. Not nonsense. I want to cling to his youth, because I believe so intensely in Youth as the only possible redeemer of this mad bad old world. I am old enough to be crusted with the bad traditions of the past: he is still fresh and young enough to fling off traditions.

LENA (*becoming excited*). No, not even he is young enough for that. There is need for new life, a life concentrated to the future. Oh, that I might mother it!

HOWARD *looks at her in wonder. The noise off becomes more and more aggressive as the door opens and OLD SACHS, drunk, rolls in. He mimics a conversation between him and another, with coarse guffaws punctuating the narrative.*

SACHS. "Your belly's as full of beer as an egg is full of meat," he said; and "Your head's as empty as the Heidelberg vat," I said. "Show me the man that's my master, empty or full," I said; and because at that moment a cat got mixed up with my legs and sent me sprawling, the fools laughed and cried: "There's your master!" I being drunk, as anyone with half an eye can see.

HOWARD (*whimsically*). Disgustingly drunk!

SACHS (*raving*). You young fool! Beer is the source of Germany's greatness. (*His hands caress his paunch, and he chuckles good-humouredly.*)

HOWARD. Who was your antagonist?

SACHS (*slyly*). Never you mind! One who'll get the better of you, for all your cleverness.

HOWARD (*pausing for a moment's consideration*). Oh? Produce this marvel!

SACHS (*putting his finger to the side of his nose*). I'm not from yesterday! (*He winks*). You sly fox!

HOWARD. Is it somebody I know?

SACHS. A serious man. When others are drinking and making merry, he paces up and down the world planning and plotting! An uncommonly 'cute man! (*The explosive consonants occasion hiccoughing*).

The HARLEQUIN pirouettes in again from Left, crosses the stage, approaching LENA, who shrinks back; he passes out with a laugh. The opening of the door releases the noise of the revellers in the bar.

SACHS. They'll be going to the market-place now: it is the hour. And my cellar still choked with undrunk beer! The fools! The more for me, the more for me!

LENA (*to HOWARD*). It is the usual Mid-Lent festival. The market-place will be a scene of wild and unrestrained revelry.

Some FIGURES pass the window, rolling, singing; others including HARLEQUIN and others in fantastic costume, come on from Left and across the stage, going off Right: some of them are singing, or playing concertinas, lutes or guitars. SACHS rolls out with them. BERGENROTH comes in at the end of the party, quiet. Seeing that LENA and HOWARD are together, his quietness is ousted by an expression of fury.

BERGENROTH (*curtly to HOWARD*). You will leave in twenty minutes?

HOWARD. You have no doubt he will be there?

BERGENROTH. None. I am a man of my word. I give full measure: I exact full measure. (*He gives a sharp glance to LENA, who winces slightly*).

HOWARD (*not to be impressed*). Indeed! You speak as if that were an uncommon virtue. One expects it of honest men, Mr. Bergenroth.

BERGENROTH *says nothing; but with quiet deliberateness goes out.*

HOWARD. May I wait here?

LENA. Do.

HOWARD *takes up a newspaper; sits down and starts to read.* LENA *goes to the door Left and listens.*

HOWARD. Did you hear anything? Is he moving?

LENA. I thought I heard a movement. I must have been mistaken.

She goes to the window; pushes it open. The noise of music, penny trumpets, etc. is heard faintly. She closes the window and draws the curtains.

LENA. It is strange. This merry-making unnerves me. It is laughter without mirth; noise without music. Mid-Lent! A breathing-space between a fasting and a fasting. And yet tomorrow they will be guzzling wine and beer as usual.

HOWARD. You are bitter. Why don't you accept mankind for what it is? Life for most of these people is normally a long grey grind without relief, earning their miserable bread by the sweat of their brows and the breaking of their backs. How can you wonder if they take this one opportunity in a season to let themselves go? It is a relief from the tricking and grinding and toiling of every day.

LENA. What a world that can provide only such relief!

HOWARD. It is the world we live in. (*He looks at his watch*). Ten minutes more and then I go in search of Johann, of whom I am damnably jealous! (*He laughs.*)

LENA (*her voice vibrating*). I have an hour's respite.

HOWARD. What do you mean by that?

LENA (*pausing a moment, then flinging back her head proudly*). I will tell you. It will be good for you. I will tell you. In ten minutes you will leave here; you will reach Johann twenty minutes later: that is, in half an hour. It will take ten minutes to persuade Johann to return and it will take you twenty minutes to return with him. An hour.

HOWARD. Well?

LENA. My freedom will then be ended.

HOWARD (*rising*). I don't understand.

LENA. I offered myself to Bergenroth on condition that he found Johann.

HOWARD (*horror-stricken*). You offered yourself . . . ?

LENA (*slightly out of control*). Yes. I thought the boy would die.

HOWARD. You love him so much?

LENA. I love him, yes. It is not much to give.

HOWARD. Your virginity?

LENA (*quietly*). I said I would let him marry me. I offered no more.

HOWARD. But Bergenroth is not a man to be put off in that way.

LENA. My life is my own.

HOWARD. You mean you would take your own life?

LENA. Yes, a thousand times over rather than that.

HOWARD (*in awe*). I think you are the most wonderful woman I have ever met. (*He goes to take her hand, as if to kiss it.*)

LENA (*drawing back from him, with a low hurt cry*). Don't touch me: I couldn't bear it.

HOWARD. But this mustn't be allowed. No woman should sacrifice so much.

LENA. You say that? Would you not give your life for the boy?

HOWARD. My life, yes. . . a tribute from Thirty to Eighteen!

At this moment, above the quiet murmur of noises outside, there rises a swelling volume of more deliberate music. A party of Pathfinders, singing a marching-song, are passing by; as they approach the words are heard.

PATHFINDERS' SONG

Come, throw off your bedclothes and fling night away,

Go, strip you and bath you and greet the new day!

Fling open the windows and greet the new day!

If sleep still enchains you and dreams still hold sway,

Shout out: "I've awakened and lo! it is day!

The darkness has vanished and lo! it is day!"

The world's to be cleaned up: there's no time to waste.

Give heed to the voice that is calling: "Make haste!

Go get you your brooms and your axes: Make haste!

Hack here and hack there and uproot without ruth

The weeds than entangle and strangle the truth

And hinder the progress of clear-visioned Youth!

HOWARD goes to the window and draws the curtains apart; LENA follows him and the two stand together, shoulder almost touching shoulder.

Presently HANNS comes in from Left; he is dressed as in the first act and carries his lute. He still looks pale, and there is excitement in his bearing. He looks at HOWARD and LENA with the dawning of knowledge in his eyes; steps towards them, and steps back again, undecided.

HOWARD (not turning round). How jolly and happy they are!

HANNS looks at them again; an expression almost of pain trembles momentarily on his lips. He goes out Right: the others do not hear him.

HOWARD (excited). That's the spirit. (*He sings a snatch of the song of the Pathfinders*). Clean living, the open air, throwing off the artificial things of civilisation: that's what we want! Lord! I'm beginning to think I'm not so old after all. Thirty—what's thirty if you still feel young.

LENA (*only now coming from the window.*) But at your age you can't "throw off," at my age you can't. For good or ill, we're made, and the most we can do is not to get in the way of the young. No! There's one other thing we can do.

HOWARD. What's that?

LENA. We can rear new men and women untrammelled with the old traditions. We can create new life!

HOWARD. Do you realise what you are saying?

He again raises his hand as if to touch her; she shrinks from him as if contact with him would wound.

LENA (*excitedly*). No, do not touch me: it is not safe.

HOWARD (*persisting in his thought*). Do you realise that you who are talking about creating new life have relinquished the right to create?

LENA. I have relinquished nothing! (*She throws her hands out and down, exposing herself as it were to attack.*)

HOWARD (*uneasy*). But . . .

LENA (*with quiet forcefulness*). Give me a child!

HOWARD (*non-plussed*). I . . .

LENA. I will mother the finest child that ever drew breath on this earth and you will father it.

HOWARD. I . . .

LENA. This is the choice which will decide whether your mind is tethered or free.

HOWARD. I . . .

LENA. Go now. But come back. I shall judge you by your courage in this decision.

HOWARD *is dumb; turning, but with his eyes still on her, he goes slowly out Right.*

LENA *remains still for some seconds, and then quietly and with dignity goes out Left. When she has gone one becomes conscious of the confusion of music and carnival noises outside. She comes back and goes out hurriedly, Right.*

CURTAIN

ACT IV.

SHREINBAUM. *A clearing in the wood above Burgstein. There are two paths, one rising as it leads off the stage, Left; the other beneath it, also rising as it leaves, but at a lower level: a fringe of bushes between them. Fastened to the trunk of a tree on the Left, a shrine containing the black image of the Virgin. In the background, the cliff-edge and the sky. Trees rise from the very brink of the cliff, but there are gaps.*

It is night. Bright moonlight.

Sitting on the rising ground near the edge of the cliff, and with their backs to the audience, are the YOUTH and GIRL of the last act. The GIRL sits fairly upright; the YOUTH is leaning towards her. They do not speak. JOHANN comes in from the Right, with stealthy movement; he hears footsteps behind him and slinks back into the shadow of the trees. A LAD and a GIRL come on from Right: they are Pathfinders, the girl carrying a guitar. They pass right across the stage and go off Left. A groan escapes from JOHANN. The girl on the cliff-edge turns to her companion.

GIRL. Did you hear that?

YOUTH. It was the wind.

GIRL. There is no wind.

YOUTH. Oh yes; look at the leaves of the trees:
they are shaking.

GIRL. I shouldn't have thought the wind could cry
so: it was so human. *(Slight pause).*

YOUTH. Sing to me.

GIRL. A love-song?

YOUTH (*kissing her quietly*). Of course a love-song.

GIRL *sings to her own accompaniment*:

THE FORSAKEN MAIDEN

Oh you sorry-eyed maiden
With tears brimming over,
And with heart over-laden
For the loss of your lover:
True love is unending,
The best of God's sending.
Take this ease for your pain:
He will come back again.

"Oh, he took me in rapture
And he left me in laughter;
He vaunted his capture
And the joy that came after.
His love soon found ending,
And my heart's past mending.
There's no ease for my pain
Though he come back again."

Oh, sorrow betide you,
You so weak and so human!
Go hide you, go hide you,
You sin-heavy woman!
Let this be the ending
Of love's over-spending.
Sin aye leadeth to pain:
Pray he come not again.

YOUTH. Why did you choose such a wistful song?

GIRL. Because I am happy: I couldn't bear to sing that if I were unhappy. It is time we went on. I heard two Pathfinders go by.

YOUTH. It can't be nearly ten o'clock yet and the meeting isn't till half-past. Still, I am ready. Come.

He helps her to rise. JOHANN emerges from the gloom of the trees.

JOHANN. Where are you going?

GIRL (*startled*). Oh! Have you been there all the time?

JOHANN. Yes.

GIRL. And it was you who made that noise?

JOHANN (*miserably*). The unutterable loneliness . .

GIRL. You are lonely? Join us, then. There is to be great fun on the top of the hill to-night, in celebration of Mid-Lent. A gathering of Pathfinders and people from the town.

JOHANN (*in horror*). In such a crowd I should be lonelier than ever.

YOUTH. What a queer chap you are!

JOHANN (*fiercely*). Queer, to resent loneliness?

YOUTH. Why should you be lonely? The world is full of good people.

JOHANN. The world is empty.

YOUTH. Oh come, the world is full of love. (*Involuntarily he takes the girl's arm*).

JOHANN. The world is full of hatred. It is consuming itself with hatred.

GIRL. You mean *you* hate someone?

JOHANN. I am my world!

YOUTH. Then you will consume yourself.

JOHANN. I hope so.

GIRL. Why do you hate?

JOHANN. Because I love.

GIRL. You mean you are jealous?

JOHANN. How did you know?

GIRL. It is only in jealousy that hate and love keep company in the same heart. But if your love is real, and not a selfish thing, the hate will pass—even if it means giving up your beloved.

JOHANN. Ptl I'm not that kind. When I love I want.

GIRL (*with quiet precision*). Yes, that is so many men's way of love: possession, absorption! Some day you will learn. (*She turns to go.*)

YOUTH. If you care to come, we shall be pleased to have you: on the hill-top, Tannenkreis—singing and dancing and good-fellowship!

Footsteps.

JOHANN (*hastily*). Thank you; but I think I will not come. Not now. I am expecting a friend.

BERGENROTH *comes in from Right.*

JOHANN. Perhaps this is he.

YOUTH. Then Goodbye.

GIRL. Goodbye. I'll pray for your release.

JOHANN (*mechanically, as he turns to BERGENROTH*).
Goodbye.

YOUTH and GIRL *go out.*

BERGENROTH. Who were they?

JOHANN. Lovers. I don't know them. Quick, while the fever is in me.

BERGENROTH (*coolly*). This is not a time for fever: it can lead you to nothing but rashness. Sit down; be calm.

JOHANN *sits down on the rising ground*. BERGENROTH *remains standing*.

JOHANN (*impatiently*). Don't moralise. Get down to it. Have you a plan?

BERGENROTH (*retaining coolness of manner*). It is dangerous here, at the cliff edge; they ought to put a railing. I have mentioned it before. Some day there will be an accident. Well, I have warned them.

JOHANN. Why do you talk about that now?

BERGENROTH. It seems relevant, when we are within a yard of possible death.

JOHANN *gives a glance in the direction of the cliff-edge; shudders. Quietens*.

JOHANN. Death is a soothing thought.

BERGENROTH. For those who are tired of life. (*Pause*). He will come this way in less than half an hour.

JOHANN. Why? And how do you know?

BERGENROTH. I have arranged it. He will come to fetch you.

JOHANN (*rising, in fear*). How does he know I'm here?

BERGENROTH. I told him.

JOHANN. You betrayed me?

BERGENROTH (*remaining quiet*). Yes.

JOHANN (*quietened by the other's quiet, bitterly*).
Even my accomplices in evil betray me. There
is no honour even among rogues.

BERGENROTH. Don't be a fool. I had a purpose.

JOHANN. I've no doubt.

BERGENROTH. He will come here, knowing that you
are here; he will be keen with the desire to
punish you for having struck the boy. (JOHANN
winces). He will intend to bring you to
justice: thus you will be out of his way.

JOHANN (*feverishly*). Well, and what do you intend
me to do?

BERGENROTH. It is night; how easy to slip over
the edge of the cliff in this uncertain light!

JOHANN. You mean that I am to murder him!

BERGENROTH. Your own desire suggests the thought.
The tinkling of a lute, Right.

JOHANN (*hysterically*). I can't bear this everlasting
music!

BERGENROTH. You are nervy.

*Two PATHFINDERS come on: one strums a guitar.
They are laughing and chattering. BERGENROTH and
JOHANN fall into the shadow. The PATHFINDERS cross
the stage and pass off, Left.*

JOHANN. Youth, and music, and love!

BERGENROTH. Don't be sentimental; pull yourself
together!

JOHANN (*toying with the idea*). He will pass out of the world, and then? Oh, it is sweet to think of him out of the world! He said to me "Your love is the love forbidden which leads to destruction." He little thought that it would lead to his destruction. (*He laughs*).

BERGENROTH. And it is so easy. A false step—and that is the end.

They go mechanically to the edge of the cliff and look over.

JOHANN. Is death so easy?

BERGENROTH (*flippantly*). Another's death, yes.

JOHANN. And I suppose Hanns is content that I should pass right out of life.

BERGENROTH. The boy? Yes. He doesn't give you a thought. All he thinks of is the Englishman. Why you should all be so wild about the boy I don't know, but there's no doubt that with the Englishman out of the way you'd soon get his friendship again.

JOHANN (*fearfully*). But if he ever knew that I was responsible for the Englishman's death?

BERGENROTH. You're a fool. How could he ever know?

JOHANN. Hanns has a sixth sense. It is true. He is more than human; he has rapport with other spheres. (BERGENROTH *scorns the suggestion, but JOHANN does not heed him*). He is a well of innocence and delight. Dear God! the days we have spent together, joying in each other's company—when he has wanted

nobody but me, and I never anybody but him. He was my world, my all. (*With a cry from the heart*). Why did he change?

BERGENROTH. He will change back to you when the Englishman is out of the way.

JOHANN. He would hate me for my deceit. Oh, I am a weakling, unable to stand on my own legs—dependent on him, with no use for life without him.

BERGENROTH (*pressing*). Well, then . . .

JOHANN (*heavily*). And no use for life with him and the knowledge of my own deceit.

BERGENROTH. You fool! You credit the boy with powers he doesn't possess. He will never know, can never know. You will be ridding the world of one more Englishman: what a crime!

JOHANN. You tempt me.

BERGENROTH. I will see that you escape. Here is money. (*He takes the money from his pocket; JOHANN pushes it aside*). You can be well into Austria before the body is found.

JOHANN (*suddenly*). And why are *you* so anxious for his death?

BERGENROTH (*taken aback*). I too find him in my way.

JOHANN (*suddenly again*). Then *you* put him out of your way.

BERGENROTH. But this is nonsense!

JOHANN (*continuing his own thought*). I shall not! (*He turns away; BERGENROTH grabs at but misses his arm*).

BERGENROTH. Come here, you idiot! (JOHANN *stops and half-turns*). If you refuse to do this thing you shall answer for it. I will take you back to him.

He springs upon JOHANN, who is taken unawares and scarcely resists the onslaught. The two men struggle violently, falling to the ground; they pant but do not speak; they roll nearer and nearer to the edge of the cliff. BERGENROTH seems to be unaware of this, but JOHANN consistently tends to struggle to the edge until, with a final effort, he forces BERGENROTH over. He is himself almost carried over, but clutches at a tree which springs from the cliff-edge and by this means drags himself back to safety. He is mad with excitement and rushes about in a gesticulating hysteria, running up the incline and down again, and would seem to be about to fling himself over when the silence is split by the sound of the marching PATHFINDERS. JOHANN, stayed in his purpose, stands motionless, black against the sky, taut and enigmatic. A glow of warm light gradually suffuses the stage, which simultaneously resounds with the firm tramp and rhythmic music of song, lute and guitar. The PATHFINDERS come on from the Right, many of them carrying flaming torches. They do not pause, but march right across the stage, taking the path down-stage. The last boy takes his torch to the foot of the tree to which the shrine is attached and forces it into the ground.

BOY. The last torch for the Black Virgin! (*He goes off*).

JOHANN, *unmoving, remains unnoticed. The song dies away in the distance as HANNS comes on.*

PATHFINDERS' SONG.

The world's to be cleaned up: there's no time to waste.
Give heed to the voice that is calling: Make haste!
Go get you your brooms and your axes: Make haste!

Hack here and hack there and uproot without ruth
The weeds that entangle and strangle the truth
And hinder the progress of clear-visioned Youth!

HANNS *walks slowly as if tired: his lute is under his arm. A moment passes before the recognition and then JOHANN cries out in a great shout of pained joy.*

JOHANN. Hanns!

HANNS (*turning, in a tone of excitement, subdued*).
Johann!

JOHANN *rushes to him, clasps him feverishly to him; the lute falls to the ground unheeded. JOHANN, in a passion of love, clings to the boy, kisses him, muttering "My Hanns," "My Boy." HANNS does not speak, nor actively respond, but suffers the caresses passively. JOHANN, at last realising that his fervour is not met with equal fervour, holds HANNS at arms' length.*

JOHANN. No longer ago than this morning you loved me.

HANNS. I still love you; but I can't give all my love to one person. My heart is big, Johann; I love many. Listen to that music up there on the hill-top: that is those boys and girls who just went by. I think I love them all. I want to be with them. I can't give anybody all of me. I am mine and I am all the world's. Don't you understand, Johann? Do try. I

can't put my heart in prison and chain up my feelings. Living and giving are one.

JOHANN *shakes his head, not understanding.*

JOHANN. It is the end, Hanns. You pass on; I stay. Goodbye.

He again seizes HANNS in his arms, kisses him furiously, and then hurries goes off Right, returning almost immediately and looking expectantly towards HANNS, whose back is to him; but realising that there is nothing more to be said he does not come farther on. Presently he sits on the cliff-edge, his head bent in dejection.

Meantime, HANNS stands unmoving, drooping; his figure expresses intense weariness. Presently he looks round and his eye is caught by the image of the Black Virgin lit up by the torch-flame. With a movement of mingled eagerness and hesitancy he goes nearer to it, looks up at it pathetically, and his fingers interlock themselves in a gesture of supplication. He speaks in short jerky gasps, rather like a child grown tired with crying.

HANNS. Oh, you strange Black Mother of God, what do *you* make of it all? Isn't the world rather a joke? Loving is such a pain . . . Poor Johann! And *him*, too. . . and Lena . . . all loving and wanting and wanting in vain. See here, you kind-faced Black Virgin, what did He make us such half-formed creatures for. . . longing and longing and never achieving? It's not fair. It must mean something. It can't be a joke. It would be such a bad joke.

A SECOND BOY *comes on.*

SECOND BOY. Hallo!

HANNS (*turning round*). Hallo!

SECOND BOY. Going to the top? It's late, isn't it?

HANNS. Yes, I suppose it is.

SECOND BOY. Ripping night, isn't it? They'll be coming down again soon. You coming? It looks splendid from the valley—all those torches. Like fireflies. They're dancing up there now. You coming?

HANNS. Are you alone?

SECOND BOY. Um. Come on! (*He takes HANNS' arm; they go off together arm in arm*).

JOHANN *rises; in a fury he rushes to the shrine. He seizes hold of the image, wrenching it from its niche.*

HOWARD and LENA *come on hurriedly during this episode.*

JOHANN (*holding the image in front of him*). You miserable sham! (*He raises the figure above his head and brings it crashing to the ground*).

HOWARD. What are you doing?

JOHANN *turns round, startled.*

JOHANN. It is your miserable Black Virgin, with her coating of lies. She won't smile her empty comfort on any other poor dupe. Oh, what a world of humbug and lies and hypocrisies it is! Thank God I'm quit of it!

HOWARD. Sh! Calm yourself, old fellow. You're unstrung. What is the matter? I've come to fetch you.

JOHANN (*shrieking*). Yes, I know. But it's too late.

LENA. What do you mean? Have you seen him?

JOHANN. Whom? Hanns? Bergenroth?

LENA. Either of them.

JOHANN (*slightly calmer*). I've seen both. One is in hell and the other has passed on beyond your ken and mine.

LENA (*excitedly*). You are speaking in enigmas. Explain yourself.

HOWARD (*quietly*). Tell us quietly what has happened?

JOHANN (*somewhat calmed*). Hanns has gone up there with the Pathfinders. He's not been gone five minutes.

LENA (*in agitation*). I will go and find him. I fear for him. He was not well enough to stand this night air.

HOWARD. We will wait here.

LENA *goes off Left. When she has gone the two men are slightly ill-at-ease. JOHANN shifts his feet nervously. HOWARD, coming quickly to a decision which he promptly executes, holds out his hand. JOHANN obeying the hypnotic suggestion, takes it. They remain with hands clasped for a moment or two.*

HOWARD. You hated me.

JOHANN. I so easily hate.

HOWARD. Yes: it's a superstition not easily got rid of. What did you mean just now when you said you were quit of the world?

JOHANN. I have killed a man.

HOWARD (*laughing nervously*). What new joke is this?

JOHANN (*speaking with quiet, unexcited precision*). Bergenroth—another whom I suddenly hated, because he made me hate and despise myself. I killed him. He is now in hell.

HOWARD. How. . . and why have you not run away?

JOHANN. Why should I run away? Death is excellent. It was so easy to kill him. We struggled—here, on the cliff-top. He was only thinking of his own life—not of taking mine. I was thinking of his life too—and I meant to destroy it. I sent him rolling down the cliff; and he tempted me no more. (*He laughs a dry little laugh.*)

HOWARD *goes to the cliff edge and looks over.*

HOWARD. It would be certain death. What are you. . .

There is a sound of HANNS and LENA returning.

JOHANN *breaks into HOWARD'S unfinished sentence.*

JOHANN. They're coming back: I can't bear to see him again.

JOHANN *rushes off, up the incline.* HANNS and LENA *come in.* HANNS *is speaking in quiet eager tones.*

HANNS. I saw how it was—or ought to be. I would have told you I was going; but I felt in the way. I couldn't interrupt.

LENA. I have told you before that you are a child, a foolish child. How could you have dared to leave us like that?

HANNS. Oh, I intended coming back some time . . .
Hail! (*This to HOWARD*). Now don't you
start scolding me too, you all-conquering Eng-
lishman! But I know when I'm wanted and
I saw by the . . . Well, if you must know . .
by the way she was holding herself—all ting-
ling and expectant, that I wasn't wanted them.

HOWARD (*coming down towards him*). You gave us a
fright. (*He puts his hand over HANNS' shoul-
der and the latter presses nearer to him*).

HOWARD. You make me feel as if I were ninety-nine
when you cling to me like this, Hanns!

HANNS (*roguishly*). Well, you are getting on, aren't
you?

HOWARD. Thirty, by your leave.

HANNS (*in the same spirit*). And not yet married!
Have you considered your duty to the future?

HOWARD. I have. And one of my duties is to keep an
eye on you. I shall keep you in tow in future.

HANNS. Do you really think you will?

HOWARD (*suddenly serious*). You are not thinking of
leaving us again?

HANNS (*also serious*). There is Johann.

HOWARD (*tenderly*). You mustn't think too much about
Johann, old boy. Perhaps you will never see
him again.

HANNS (*moving away*). Oh, yes: he is quite near.
He was here a few minutes ago. I think he is
not far away. I will find him. . .

HOWARD. No, please Hanns: let the past be past.
Don't try and find him.

HANNS (*going away*). But I must.

HOWARD (*pleading*). Please! You will only give yourself unnecessary pain.

HANNS (*persistent*). But Johann is in pain. (*He moves further away*).

HOWARD. Then let me come too.

HANNS. No. That would frighten him away. No.
You go and talk to her' (*He points to LENA, and lightly chuckles*). You're neglecting her shamefully.

HOWARD. Do you promise to come back in a few minutes' time?

HANNS. I promise. I must be here when the Pathfinders come down, in any case.

HOWARD. Very well, then, you self-willed child.
Go on.

HANNS *goes*. HOWARD *turns towards LENA and as he approaches her stumbles over the fragments of the broken image*.

HOWARD. I wonder why poor Johann had such a vicious dislike of the Black Virgin.

LENA. I expect he remembered what I told him about the Black Virgins this morning; and he suddenly realised that he too had been worshipping a creature of wood, painted according to his own fancy. Most of us do. (*Her hands are at her sides, her fists clenched tight: she speaks through her teeth*). We don't like the

paint scraped from our graven images. The naked truth is hurtful to weak sight.

HOWARD (*looking at her intently, suddenly*). Lena, show me your hands.

LENA *mechanically holds out her hands to him: the action is that of one presenting a chalice. He examines her hands and starts back.*

HOWARD. Blood. Your nails have drawn blood. Oh, Lena: your self-control is terrible. I am ashamed. My dear, I am not good enough for you. I have nothing to offer you comparable to your exquisite truthfulness and strength. I think I could worship you.

LENA (*holding back*). I would reject your worship. I only claim the tribute of your manhood and your love.

An involuntary movement of his arms implies an invitation. They embrace.

HANNS *comes in*.

HANNS (*boyishly*). I am jealous.

HOWARD. Of whom?

HANNS (*pouting*). Both of you.

HOWARD. Forgive us, old chap. It had to be, you know.

HANNS. Yes. Bless you, my children. (*He puts his hands on their shoulders; then turns his lips towards LENA to be kissed: she kisses them. Then towards HOWARD, and he kisses them.*) Fancy the sober Englishman kissing a man!

HOWARD (*playfully pursuing him*). A man—you!

HANNS (*suddenly*). I have seen Johann. He's going to Austria, he says. But I'm sure he wasn't telling the truth. Johann is afraid of telling the truth when the truth hurts. But he wouldn't come back to Burgstein.

The sound of the returning PATHFINDERS.

HANNS. Here they come!

He shows greater and greater excitement as the sound comes nearer. Presently the PATHFINDERS come on from the Left, with torches, singing and playing.

The world's to be cleaned up: there's no time to waste,
Give heed to the voice that is calling: Make haste!
Go get you your brooms and your axes: Make haste!

Hack here and hack there and uproot without ruth
The weeds that entangle and strangle the truth
And hinder the progress of clear-visioned Youth!

SECOND BOY *breaks away from the end of the party and goes to* HANNS.

SECOND BOY. Come on!

HANNS (*turning to* HOWARD *and* LENA). I'm off.
I'll leave you to each other.

LENA (*quietly*). Hanns, your home is with us.

HANNS (*mock-serious*). What! Do you think I could bear to live with you two old fogies?

SECOND BOY. Hanns is coming to stay with me to-night. Come on, Hanns; we sha'n't catch the others up if we don't hurry. Oh—that's our torch. (*He makes a dash at the torch before the empty shrine*). Why, the Virgin's gone! Fancy putting a lighted torch before an empty shrine! (*He rejoins* HANNS, *whose right arm*

he takes in his left, holding the torch aloft in his right hand).

HANNS. Goodbye!

HANNS and SECOND BOY go out.

The stage is almost in darkness. LENA and HOWARD embrace.

LENA. He is right. *(Pause)*.

HOWARD *(quietly)*. But we are right, too.

The Song of the Pathfinders lingers momentarily and then dies away.

CURTAIN.

September, 1921.

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